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THE ORDER, QUALIFICATIONS, AND DUTY OF
A CHRISTIAN MINISTER; 1026. f. 7.
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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
V I S I T A T I O N
OF THE
ARCHDEACON OF SURREY,
ON THE
TWENTIETH OF SEPTEMBER, M.DCC.XCI.
AT THE
CHURCH OF ST. SAVIOUR'S, SOUTHWARK.

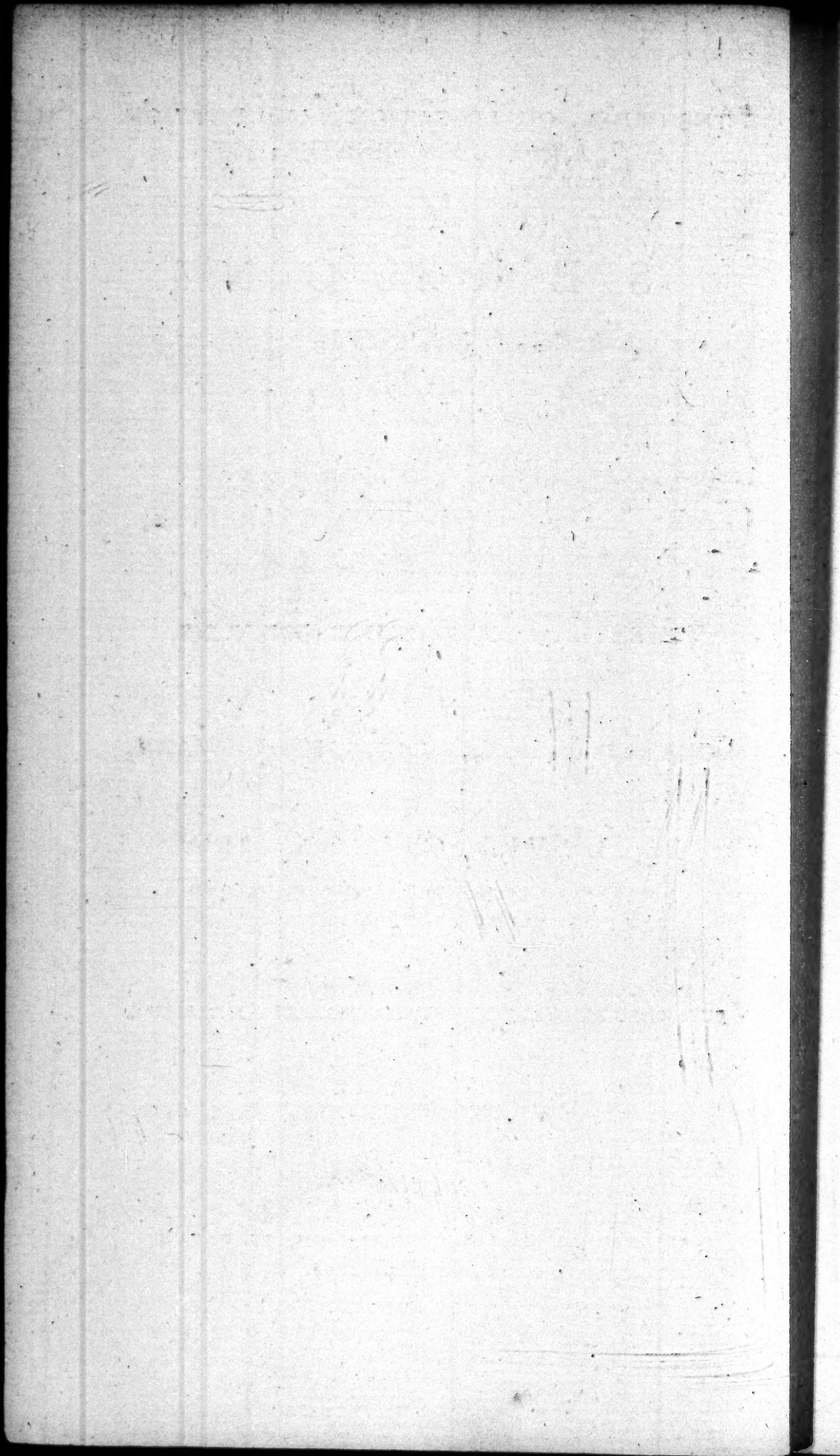
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CURATE OF ST. SAVIOUR'S, SOUTHWARK, AND
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L O N D O N:

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TO THE
ARCHDEACON,
AND THE
COMMISSARY OF SURREY,
AND TO THE
CLERGY OF THE DEANERY OF SOUTHWARK,

THE FOLLOWING
DISCOURSE

IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR RESPECTFUL SERVANT,
AND AFFECTIONATE FELLOW-LABOURER,

DAVID GILSON,

TO THE

ALABAMA COM

AND THE

COMMISSIONER OF SURVEY

AND TO THE

CHIEF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SURVEY

THE FOLLOWING

IS A LIST OF THE

LANDS

IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA

AND THE TERRITORIES

OF THE UNITED STATES

MATTHEW X. 16.

* BEHOLD, I SEND YOU FORTH AS SHEEP IN THE
 * MIDST OF WOLVES : BE YE THEREFORE WISE
 * AS SERPENTS, AND HARMLESS AS DOVES.*

IN requesting your attention, in applying my own regard, to a few observations on the principal duties, incumbent on a Preacher of the Gospel, there is reason to believe I could not have found a fitter season—than when several of my audience, are not less the ornaments than judges of doctrine,—and whom to remind—it is only my province—not to instruct; nor did words more proper occur to sanction the subject, than these made use of by our Lord himself, to his primitive apostles, when he first commissioned them to bear the sacred name, and discharge the high employ.

A dissertation of this kind appears the more requisite, as it has become the fashion of most companies, and would really seem the weighty business of many individuals, to settle this matter in a court—which we neither allow to be fair, nor believe to be adequate: in proof of

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which,

which, if we lay under any necessity to prove it, it were only needful to produce its varying rules, and unkind decisions. Some will not be satisfied, let us do what we can; and others would not be displeased, if we did a great deal less. Some look upon us as very ordinary beings—upon whom no great trust is laid, and of whom no great diligence is expected. There are others not so easily contented; that grow angry with every thing human they see about us, intolerant of every indulgence which frail mortality demands; who, willing to engross the world all themselves, are distracted with envy—that we should have our little share; who call upon us for immaculate example,—where they are not very prone to imitation; and expect us to lead—where they are in no exceeding haste to follow!

My brethren! we think, it possible to draw a more candid line; and we trust you have patience, to abide while we draw it. We have an invariable rule. And we have but one. By the Word of God, my friends! you and I must both stand and fall. That Word changes not with the humours of mankind; with human praise—or hate—it passes not: Upon man's judgment it depends not. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away,' and it shall return, unstained, to the pure and immutable Fountain—from
which

which it flowed. In that Word will be discovered a relation, which seems, with us, at present, either misunderstood, or totally forgot; a relation, however, which subsists—and which calls for all its rights, whether it be discerned and acknowledged or not—a relation of a spiritual nature, between the Pastors and the Flock of Christ. Some profitable light may, perhaps, be thrown on this, if, previous to a discussion of those qualifications, which Reason and Scripture jointly require, in the Preachers of the Word of God, I say something of their primitive appointment, and orderly continuance—in the world—and the church of Christ.

To say, that if Man had remained perfect, he had needed no Instructor, would, perhaps, be saying too much; for, even under the smiles of Heaven in Paradise, it is not easy to conceive that the innocent offspring of Adam—had Adam continued innocent till offspring he had—could have been perfect in knowledge—at their birth. Nor does yet this suspicion, at all take away from the dignity of human nature; for the necessity of communicated knowledge implies no defect, nor is any ways inconsistent with the nature of limited, rational being. Waving, however, remarks of such sort, this we are fully

warranted to say,—that, as soon as man fell—he became ignorant—and in want of a Teacher. That place, the God of all flesh, the Fountain of knowledge, love, and mercy, vouchsafed Himself to occupy, in the earlier ages of man's existence. Our first earthly Parent, when only sensible of his nakedness, became afraid of the voice of the Lord God. What wonder then, if his degenerate sons, immersed in sin and wickedness, should dread to behold that face, whose frowns—their abominations provoked? ‘Speak thou unto us,’ said the sinful Israelites to their appointed Leader, ‘the words of the Lord thy God, and we will hear; but let us not any more hear the words of the Lord God; for if we hear any more, we shall die.’

In compassion to their weakness, their petition was granted; and, in compassion to such weakness, did it please the Lord, to establish on earth, a less extraordinary means of instruction, than that of his own immediate voice. Of all the nations of the world, he chose one people; and out of that people, he selected one tribe. These he appointed, to superintend his worship, to guard his sanctuary, and serve at his altar—until the promised Messiah, the Great High-Priest, constituted after the order of Melchisedeck,

chifedek, should render all other sacrifices unnecessary, and make the smoke of oblations and all burnt-offerings cease.

Here began a New Dispensation. A royal, an eternal Priesthood, stood forth in its full display. The blessed JESUS, the great Teacher of mankind—the ‘ Word that was in the beginning with God,’—gave to man the salutary precepts of truth, and taught his followers the wholesome doctrines of everlasting life. In his own example he set a pattern of excellence, which he commanded those that loved him to follow—in as far as they could, or should be enabled to, attain to its likeness. In the whole circle of his labours and instructions, miraculous was the display both of his power and of his love. Of all those that the Father had given him, it was his care that none should be lost. And this care he extended, far beyond the bounds of Judea,—beyond the ‘ little while,’ in which he was to be present with his disciples. He extended it to all the ‘ outcasts,’ that should be united, by his efficacious and peace-begetting merits, into one spiritual Israel—and ‘ gathered ‘ into one fold ;’ to all, that should—to the end of the world—believe in his name, or be appointed—through the preaching of the word—to salvation. In this noble view, he settled the

hopes of his chosen followers, to abide the promise, and to wait the inspiration, of the Holy Spirit of Grace.—The promise was fulfilled; and they that had lost the ‘Bridegroom’—were not ‘left comfortless’—but visited by the ‘COMFORTER’ himself; they that were ‘sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves,’ were strengthened and directed to guard against surrounding evils, by the ‘cunning of the serpent,’ ‘by the harmlessness of the dove.’

In the history of these first appointed Instruments of the spread of the gospel, there is not certainly any epoch so important, or so striking, as this we mention. During even our Saviour’s presence among them, what vicious passions—do we observe, at times, rise in their bosoms; what numerous frailties do we find on record? Though they ‘followed Christ,’ it seems, in some instances, as if it was owing to his supreme power—in giving them a call which they could not resist,—rather than to any thorough conviction of the high interests of his kingdom. It is true, they ‘forsook all, and followed him;’ but none of them had much to forsake: and even that—they seemed not to have left—without the expectancy of worldly desire.—‘Behold,’ said they, ‘we have left all, and followed thee, what shall we have?’—When their pride was hurt,

hurt, they cried for heaven's fire—to vindicate their cause. They disputed about who should be greatest among them. They found fault with the honours, that a grateful penitent paid their Lord; and thought that, which might be given to the poor, was a waste, when bestowed on Him. They murmured oft among themselves: and excited, from their meek and lowly Master, words—that pierce with sorrow the susceptible breast.—‘O ye of little faith—how long shall I be with you and suffer you?’—‘O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?’—‘Have I been so long with you, Philip, and yet hast thou not known me?’—‘Will ye also’—said he—amid the defection of the carnal-minded, to the twelve—‘will ye also go away?’—In the midst of his sufferings, they *did go away*. In the midst of his sorrows—they *slept*. They ‘denied’ him in the hour of trial; they ‘forsook him;’ they ‘fled.’

Such their conduct—while yet unsatisfied about the truth of ‘Him who came from God,’ and who, ‘they trusted, was he that should have redeemed Israel;’ but of whose redemption, wrought without external triumph and glory, they were but unsteady believers, while yet uninfluenced by the Divine Spirit.—And such—experience tells us, and this instance affords indu-

bitable proof—will ever be the conduct of carnal minds, enjoy they what outward advantages they will, till the grace of God is implanted in their hearts, and their souls made stedfast in the faith, by its sanctifying operation,

Such was their conduct: but, attend to them after the resurrection of Jesus, after his having confirmed them in the faith of his name; and, especially, after their having had the ‘promise of the Father,’ which by him they ‘heard’—for which they ‘waited at Jerusalem,’ according to his command, completely fulfilled at the feast of Pentecost; and see how changed for the better—their manners and their lives!

No longer, about worldly pre-eminence and goods, they contended; but ‘continued with one accord’ in the exercise of ‘praise and thanksgiving’—‘distributing’ all their worldly ‘possessions, as every one had need.’ ‘Elijah’ is ‘gone up,’ but he has left his ‘mantle behind him.’ The ‘Lord is ascended;’ but his ‘Spirit’ remains with his apostles; and ‘in his name they work miracles—through Jesus of Nazareth they do many marvellous works.’ The Peter that before ‘denied him,’—hardly longer to be called—the same—now gives utterance, to his own—and to the faith of his fellow-disciples,

disciples, in expressions widely different—from—
 ‘ I know not the man!’—‘ We ought,’ said he
 and the other apostles, to the council and all the
 senate of Israel, assembled for the purpose of in-
 hibiting them from speaking any more in the
 name of Jesus—‘ We ought to obey God rather
 ‘ than men. The God of our fathers raised up
 ‘ Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.
 ‘ Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to
 ‘ be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repent-
 ‘ ance to Israel, and remission of sins. And we
 ‘ are his witnesses of these things; and so is also
 ‘ the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to
 ‘ them that obey him.’

These words, they said,—fortified and em-
 boldened by the eternal power of grace; regard-
 less, though their hearers were ‘ cut to the heart;’
 regardless, though ‘ they took counsel to slay
 ‘ them:’ but ‘ rejoicing that they were counted
 ‘ worthy to suffer shame for his sake, daily in the
 ‘ temple and in every house, they ceased not to
 ‘ teach and preach Jesus Christ.’ They ceased
 not this—in the midst of imprisonment and
 bonds; nor amid all the exaggerations of devil-
 ish envy to add to the pains of ignominious
 deaths. Deaths ignominious—they were not;
 at least, only to those that inflicted them—not to
 them who suffered. Their Lord and Master had
 been

been crucified before them; and they now 'remembered' and believed all his 'words;' and formed no wish nor expectancy, that the 'disciple' should escape the woes which befel his 'Lord'—or the 'servant' avoid the disgrace that was heaped upon his 'master.'—Such the unexampled power of God! and so can his Spirit change, as he will, the hearts he has made!

Let us now say something, of the Order which was established by these primitive Messengers, respecting those which should succeed them, in their place in the Church.

It appears incontrovertible, from the whole history of the New-Testament; and, if there were any need to back such authority, from the œconomy of the Old; that no man can have a right to enter the Church as a Minister, or to arrogate to himself that sacred character, unless he has a proper call thereto, and be initiated into so confidential a charge, by those regular means, which either Christ himself hath appointed, or the Spirit of God hath warranted pious men—from the word of God, and in consistency with its intention—to appoint. The 'Divine right of Kings,' is what I know the licentiousness of the last age pretty well got rid of; and the 'Divine right of the Church' is what the enthusiasm

thufiasm and impiety of this—would be glad to abrogate, if they could: And the attempt is neither ftrange, nor unaccountable; for it holds the fame foundation in nature and in argument, as that the owl fhould delight in darknefs—and the devil in fin.—The Sheep, that, for infection, is fhut out of the Fold—would, no doubt, rejoice—that the *pale was broken down*; and if the Wolf or the Fox be her counfellor, every man's mind may fuggelt, what advice they would give.

In the firft chapter of the Acts of the Apoftles, we have an account given us, of their appointing Matthias, to fupply that place in the Miniftry, from which—though he had therein once been numbered—' Judas by tranfgreffion fell.' And it is evident from their manner of proceeding, how their fucceffors in apoftolic function fhould act on all fuch occafions. It was not the firft that offered himfelf for fo holy a fervice, or who might judge himfelf qualified for fo high a charge—that was admitted to participate with the Eleven—that were ' chosen of Chrift.' No! —it was of the ' difciples' which had been ' called by Chrift himfelf;' ' of thefe men,' faid Peter, ' who have companied with us, all the time ' that the Lord Jefus went in and out among us, ' beginning from the baptifm of John unto that
fame

‘ same day that he was taken up from us, must
 ‘ one be ordained to be a witness with us of his
 ‘ resurrection.’—And so it is exceedingly proper,
 that those, who are to be set apart for religious
 services, should ‘ company’ before-hand, with the
 devout and pious of the Christian Church; that they
 had some previous acquaintance with—the ‘ baptism of
 John’—with repentance and amendment of life, and
 with the communion of christian fellowship, before they
 lay any claim to those enjoyments, which, the
 disinterestedness of those—who ‘ sold houses and
 ‘ lands,’ made ‘ common to those that lacked.’

The apostles, after having appointed two, addressed
 the Lord in prayer, to determine their further
 choice.—‘ Thou Lord, which knowest ‘ the hearts
 of all men, shew whether of these ‘ two thou hast
 chosen.’ ‘ And the lot fell upon ‘ Matthias, and he
 was numbered with the ‘ eleven apostles.’ This
 ordination, it appears, as effectually ranked him
 in the exalted class of the first Preachers of
 Christ, as if he had been admitted thereto by
 Christ himself. And such, indeed, was his
 command and promise, given to the disciples,
 before his ascension. ‘ All power ‘ is given unto
 me, in heaven and in earth. Go ‘ ye therefore,
 and teach all nations, baptizing ‘ them in the
 name of the Father, and of the Son, ‘ and

‘ and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world.’ The ‘ power, received by him from the Father,’ he thus delegated to them; and left them a power and a charge, to appoint others to help them in their labours in his vineyard, and to succeed them—when they should be themselves admitted, to drink ‘ the new wine with him in his glorious Father’s kingdom.’

In a generation or two, the extraordinary effusions of the Spirit became unnecessary; seeing there were so many teachers consecrated, and so many churches planted as to facilitate the dissemination of the gospel over the inhabited parts of the earth: And as the faith of believers strengthened, miraculous works became less requisite; and the great Miracle of redemption being wrought, the Eternal Spirit the Comforter being imparted,—and ordinances established for the common use of Christians—wherein to seek its inspiration—such miracles were to be expected no more. Christ the great Foundation-stone being laid, and the chief Pillars of the Church raised, it was left for industrious and faithful workmen—to eye the direction of the Master-Builder, and by following his plan, to finish—

to adorn—and guard the noble Pile! The ‘withered hand,’ being once restored, was by ‘exercise and labour to be preserved sound;’ the ‘blinded eye’ being ‘opened,’ was not again to familiarise itself with ‘darkness’—to extrude the ‘light;’ the ‘leprous body,’ once cleansed, was to keep itself from contagious fellowship and the ‘house unclean!’

Thus far—of the general appointment of christian ministers, in the early ages of the Church. I shall now endeavour to make it be seen, that it is the fate of the present ministers of the word—as well as it was of its original professors—to be ‘sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:’—happy may they think it for their comfort, that they are sent by such a Master!—And that it is still as much their duty, as it was that of the ‘apostles’—to be cunning as serpents, ‘and harmless as doves.’

These two aims, I shall not divide; but by uniting them, as occasion serves, strive to give them greater force. I shall attempt, to prove the necessity, and to shew how becoming—it is—that a present Minister of Christ should be a Good Scholar: Secondly, that he should be a Sound Divine:—And, Thirdly,—though not forgetting its having a right to claim the first place in

in

in importance—that he should be a Good Man
—a Good Christian.

First, it is necessary for a Minister to be a Good Scholar.—‘Beye therefore wise as serpents.’
—However little necessity there was, for the first disciples of Christ being endued with human learning, the cause which prevented that necessity now existing no more, the necessity again returns. According to the established order, in the constituted channel, the grace of God and the effusions of the divine Spirit, may still be expected—and to the comfort, I hope, of many of us—are known and acknowledged—to flow; but the supernatural and visible display of such blessings, if we are sober in our reasonings, we must be convinced is ceased with the occasion. If there be any truth in analogy, this stands in proof. For if it were to be admitted, as some of the craftiest of the cunning, and some of the most despicable of the vile, would have us—in their favour—to admit, that miraculous communications are now as real, and should be allowed in as great extent, as in the days of the apostles; how can they account for one gift being given, and another—in the time they refer to as common—being withheld? Why are not these modern apostles instantaneously endued with the ‘gift of tongues’—the power of ‘healing diseases,’

‘ eases,’ and of ‘ working all manner of wonder-
 ‘ ful works?’ The truth is,—and it is not easy
 to conceive, how the truth should in this case be
 prevented from plainly appearing to be—that
 the one requires only a bad heart and a bold
 tongue—instances of which being in the world
 are not unfrequent—to declare; but the other
 demands the evidence of such undeniable facts,—
 as have yet appeared beyond their power—to
 prove: ‘Till the apostolic sanction, then, is
 complete, there is little room, in this way, of
 claiming apostolic privilege. When we hear
 them speak the languages of different countries,
 in which they have never been instructed; when
 we see them revive the period wherein miracles
 of a most indubitable sort attested the authority
 of the Preacher; then it will be time enough to
 rank them on the footing of those, who, though
 they were ‘ all Galileans,’ were heard to ‘ speak
 ‘ in tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance,’
 the wonderful works of God. ‘Till that happen,
 it might be as well for moderate men, and tem-
 perate christians, to think more—of the ‘ words
 ‘ of Moses,’ than of their ‘ traditions’—who
 have, without any authority from the law, taken
 his ‘ chair;’ and to pay a little more regard to
 the words of Christ himself, and of those whom
 he especially appointed, than to the disorderly
 and dangerous opinions of those, who, without
 any

any designed use on their part to the Gospel—
 usurp a right of being called its Teachers. It
 might be as well if the sober disciples of Jesus
 would manage their inheritance—without aid of
 aliens; would have recourse to his word as their
 guide and comforter; learn of his true Apostle
 to ‘examine the Spirits;’ and to remember that
 there is a Spirit—and a busy one too—which
 cometh not from God!

Further, let it be observed on this head, that
 even in the time of the apostles themselves, hu-
 man learning was not useless. It was no disad-
 vantage to the christian cause, that ‘Paul was
 ‘chosen to be the apostle of the Gentiles;’ and
 he deserves nothing worse than a smile who would
 say—it was any disadvantage to Paul—that he
 was ‘brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.’
 Recollect, I beseech you, the circumstances at-
 tending this first appointment in the Church;
 and let not more stress be laid upon it, than it
 was ever intended to bear.

For the wisest and most gracious purposes, did
 our Saviour choose his disciples from the unlet-
 tered multitude: but let it be borne in mind, that
 the state of knowledge, among the Jews, was
 very different from what it either then was, or
 now is, with other nations. The acquaintance

with their own law, and the history of their own family, was the whole extent of what they did know, of what they ought to know—or of what they needed to know. To make them expert in this, their daily observances, and their keeping themselves unmixed with all other people and all other people's concerns, could not fail; could not fail to make it attainable to the lowest among them. Their Scribes and Doctors, indeed, pretended to superior knowledge; but, from the little difference observable, between their conversation, and that of the least-instructed Israelite, this would seem, with the greatest number of them, only a pretence. We find the Publicans—the Sinners—the Harlots—argue with as much information and with much fairer intent, than the Rulers of synagogues or Lawyers, that, with treacherous view to 'catch him in his words,' resorted unto Christ.

One language, and one Book, contained all the simple truths, which the natural seed of Abraham behoved to learn. We need not, therefore, much wonder to find the meanest among them tolerable adepts. The Pharisees, and Gamaliel—at that time their chief and learned Doctor,—studied their law, most strictly and most effectually; yet still with the science of other nations they were precluded—by the same order to meddle

meddle—as charged all their tribes to avoid any intercourse with their neighbouring people, lest they should imitate their idolatries, and learn their ways.

When a Dispensation, however, of universal truth and mercy was to be established, and preached; when not only the ‘Sons of Abraham according to the flesh’—but all his ‘children according to the promise,’ were to be benefited by the ‘righteousness of faith,’ it became necessary, that the messengers of that salvation, should be acquainted with the language, and have a knowledge of the manners, of various kingdoms whither they were sent. To those first-commissioned Apostles, this knowledge was, in a great measure, miraculously afforded; it was continued to their successors, ‘till such time as Their writings—and the history of Their labours, in as far as Heaven judged expedient, completed the ‘words of the prophecy and sealed the ‘book.’ That ‘book’ to open, that ‘prophecy’ to understand and inculcate—as the ‘prophecy of peace’—is now the business of the Ministers of the Church: which that they may be enabled to do, let us attend to a remark or two, confirming the truth of that assertion I am now endeavouring to prove.

It will readily occur to you, that, as the Holy Scriptures are the only unerring guide to direct the Christian's faith and practice, the only store-house of divine knowledge, whence a Teacher of this true religion is to draw his best information and arguments, it cannot but be in some measure necessary, that he understand the original languages in which they were written. Some may say, that so many able men have commented on the sacred writings before them—that they may, by Their means, arrive at all the intelligence requisite. But those who say thus, are not much to be minded ; for their argument is weak in the extreme. It would sound oddly, if an Ambassador, to whom were committed the concerns of his own kingdom to manage with another state, should stay at home—for the relation of such as had been before him ; or be satisfied to stop on his way, contenting himself with the dispatches of ill-informed couriers—without ever resorting to court.

It is well known to all that are a degree removed from ignorance, that Commentators—instead of benefiting, have rather injured every work, whether sacred or profane, that has ever been in the world. They have set out with fair professions ; but their own fame or interest have been, commonly, so much their ruling object,
that

that thereto they have sacrificed, in the end, every thing like candour, and every thing like truth. To shew their own erudition, they have obscured their authour; and to set off a point in argument, or favour the opinion of a sect, they have sported with the word of wisdom, and made light of a doctrine of salvation. Like a man, who, himself, expert in swimming, entices the unskilful to follow his example, and tempt the flood. At the first setting out, he may lend them his aid; and teach them how to keep their heads above water. But in a while, grown fond of shewing his own dexterity, he bears away with agile prowess on the ridge of the wave; and leaves at dangerous distance his hapless scholars: He surmounts, with well-taught vigour, the current of the stream; and leaves them—to sink in the attempt—or—venting execrations on their own folly—to wade back—as ignorant as ever—to land!

And it is not only necessary, that a Minister should be skilled in the tongues, wherein the Old and New Testament are conveyed; it is also necessary that he be acquainted, and that, too, not like a smatterer, but minutely, with the manners, customs, and history of those nations, places, and kingdoms made mention of in scripture. Else how shall he be able to discern him-

self, or to cause others to discern, the congruity and agreement which subsists between sacred and profane history? And where that is not discerned, how shall he establish, so clearly and satisfyingly, the authenticity of the former? Observe but, I pray you, what scenes of error—those, that are not so instructed, now-a-days—fall into themselves, and would lead others into! Learned, or not learned, the prophets of the Old, and the inspired writers of the New-Testaments, committed no blunders, nor fell into any mistakes: and all the small appearances of incongruities—which their enemies have endeavoured to catch at—on the test of fair examination and solid learning—vanish away; a sure token, that their inspiration was indeed from above, and proceeded from that ‘Fountain of light’—of purity, and knowledge—with whom is no ‘variableness neither shadow of turning.’ But by our self-created ‘Boanerges’ of modern days, O Gentle Truth! how dost thou suffer? Thy native garments, white as snow, and transparent as the lucid wave, are by impious hands torn from off thee; and in tattered remnants of filthy patch-work, they strive to cover thy naked dignity, and unaffected grace! Hence it is, that, in houses where they would have us believe—that, in the spirit of consistency, they worship the God of truth, manners are wantonly inverted; places

places change their order, and kingdoms change their place. The rules of a vulgar mechanic are made to tie mighty monarchs; the conceptions of a slave to direct the counsels of princes : nay, in the arrogance of a licentious age, so high swells the tide of presumption, that he—who should not be able to tell the ‘degrees on the dial of ‘Ahaz’—shall think himself commissioned to—bid the ‘Sun go back!’—‘Then said I, Ah! ‘Lord God, the prophets say unto them. Then ‘the Lord said unto me, the prophets prophesy ‘lies in my name,’

Again, the necessity of human learning is apparent from this consideration, that it is made an effectual instrument to ‘convince the gainsayers.’ In the first propagation of christianity, the force of unlettered evidence was felt, and was productive of the intended effect. But, now, that not only the ‘simple’ but the ‘wise’ are enlisted under the banners of Christ, all the aids of human reason and men’s learning, are profitably employed, in defending his cause and advancing his interest. In vain would men say, that the use of all such auxiliaries is obsolete; for Christ himself confirmed it. He himself condescended to adopt all the engaging figures of human eloquence. Why do I say—‘human’ eloquence?—That, like all other good things, has been

imparted to man by the divine dispensation; and He only assumed the exercise of what was before his own. His disciples he forewarned, in their trials for his name's sake, to prepare no defence; not, as is ignorantly or mistakenly conceived, that he commanded them to abstain from preconsideration of their discourses to the people; for that 'it should be given them' in the hour of need,—'what they should answer.' But when it was given them, it was accommodated to the rules of sound reason, and the most prevailing—need I say—the most correct rhetoric? This—an undeniable proof—if proof for such purpose were needed—that God has not ordained one religion for the simple and another for the wise, but that from the same Spirit, various gifts are given, and different irradiations descend; while all the divided operations unite in one useful, one glorious effect; and as 'there are Three that bear record in heaven,' so on earth is the christian revelation comprehended in one inclusive view;—'One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.'

Did we need any other circumstance to corroborate our assertions, experience would afford us more than we wish. How often is it seen, that he who is cursed with a little learning, while he is blessed with no grace to use it, who, from the ignorance of those—whose company he seeks,
with

with the same view as the doer of evil retires to darkness—from the sufferance of those, with whom noise at any time will pass for argument—is busy in the cause of an evil master,—and forgetful of the Saviour—who was wounded for his transgressions—in vain!—To prevent the effect of such a man's wiliness, it may not be oftentimes unnecessary, that his opponent be able to 'answer a fool'—not 'according to his folly,' seeing he is already too 'wise in his own conceit;' but to the reproof of his misconceivings; and, if the Spirit of grace should second it, to the bettering of his heart. 'Howbeit,' says the apostle, even when he is shewing the excellence of his preaching above human wisdom—'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.'

The ministry of the gospel is now, and has been long, a settled ordinance. The same obligation, the same promises, lie upon and encourage, its devout adherents now—as accompanied the first that bore the reverend character. In every other profession, the greater a man's skill, the more he is entitled to praise. Why then, in this, the most dignified ever conferred upon man, shall that gain him most approbation which is his greatest defect? that, which is no inconsiderable excellence, confer no honour?

' Honour

‘ Honour and approbation’—did I say! The terms were wrong employed. It is not for honour and approbation, a minister—that would be like his Master—is bound to labour. These, let the world that confers them, and they who can condescend to be fond of such fleeting goods, divide among themselves. It is a portion—in which God’s chosen have neither part nor lot. *Their* honour awaits them in a more stable kingdom; and their reputation abides a more unchanging award. Here, to be ‘ hated ‘ of-all men’—is the bequest of their departed Lord—whom, if they would be tempted to forsake and betray, they might soon exchange their dishonour for worldly applause: but it was not for this—they were set apart by the election of God.

Let me observe, in the Second place, how indispensable it is for a minister of the present times, to be a Sound Divine. The worship of God, and the happiness of man, are so intimately connected, that he who would wish to separate them, is the enemy of both. In the knowledge of the first, consists the attainment of the latter; hence he who would teach the latter, must be well acquainted with the first. He who would take upon himself to instruct men to be happy, should be able to teach them

to

to be wise: for which purpose it is necessary that he be wise himself; not 'after a worldly sort, but after an heavenly.' The Gospel of Christ, is the 'tidings of peace,' the revelation of 'good will towards men'—from high Heaven; he that would explain this revelation, must needs be acquainted with Heaven's language—and know—when he hears it—the voice of God.

I, no more than any friend to truth—am no friend to particular systems. But there is a general system, out of which—Truth is not to be found. With this, in its fullest extent, and in all its possible applications, let a Minister of truth be acquainted. Let him possess a clear conviction of the being of a God; a mind to distinguish, and a heart to feel his attributes. Let him have a well-informed understanding to support his own persuasions, to diffuse, to enforce them. It will befit him to have a knowledge of his own nature, and of the relations in which he stands with that supreme Being, of whose existence and perfections he entertains the fullest belief. For this end, he must needs be no stranger to the history of the human Species; no stranger to the workings of his own heart. From thence he will learn the need and the use of a Revelation; and be prepared to separate
 7 between

between conjecture and proof, and put an eternal difference between truth and falshood. In the same conclusion, that confirms his own weakness, he will manifestly perceive the abundant power of God. That power, as exercised in favour and love, let him see, with faith and knowledge, in the person of God's own Son, the Mediator of the dispensation of grace. That grace, employed in sanctifying the corrupted spirits of sinful men, let him justly acknowledge in the operation of the Holy Ghost. Let him remark the agreement which Nature holds with Providence; and the elucidation which the written word of God gives to both. In that word let him seek the ground of every thing he is to believe, the foundation of every thing he is to practise. Let every ordinance, and every doctrine, be thereupon established; or let them be cast behind his back. Let this be the System he shall know, this the System he teaches.

But as in all points that are disputable,—and the vanity of man's reason and the corruption of his heart have made religious truths of this sort—an examination is requisite to put an end to difference, so becomes it the duty of a Teacher of this true system, to know all the false systems, which either have most prevailed—or do most prevail—in the world. Necessary it by no means

means is, that a Minister, of our time and place, should be acquainted with all the superstitious—and in every other place obsolete—vanities, which deform and defile the tenets of those mistaken—or those ill-intentioned—Sectaries, which take care, as far as in them lies, to ‘ wait no promise at Jerusalem,’ and to ‘ keep no appointed feast;’—but to cover up their errors in corners, and build uncommanded synagogues in every street.—The Serpent thus coils up its folds, to give effect to its venom, and precipitate its bite. The Savage of the cave—thus turns its voice to bemoanings—that it may allure to its haunt—and catch—its unwary prey !

To give an ‘ account of the faith that is in him,’ and which he preaches for the healing of others, he should not be backward: though, to convince those without knowledge—or silence vain babblers, may be beyond his power. Divinity is the most sublime science which man can study; and requires an acquaintance with all others; with a portion of the sanctifying grace of the Eternal, to make it complete. It is as old as creation; and shall only cease to please and to save, when Time shall be swallowed up. So wide a circle, cannot, without suffering, be contracted. What reason have
men—

men—and those with truly no superior gifts that can be discerned by the sober and intelligent—to arrogate to themselves the presumptuous pride of giving names to Sects of Christians? Did those Corinthians well—that said differently—‘ I am of Paul’—‘ and I of Apollos?’ Ceased they not each of them, by such carnality, to belong truly to Christ? Can he be ‘ divided?’ or ought those—who were not ‘ crucified’—or if they were, could not avail like Him—to rob him of the honour of his conquest?

An explication of the apostolic doctrines has descended, in the christian church, to our times. In the great and most essential points of religion, all its true disciples agree. Much care should be taken, lest to small things the importance of great should be assigned; or that from great things their importance should be taken away—And by the venerable Fathers and pure Sons of the Church, much care is taken; and the Theology of our age is in their hands as uncontaminated, as we have ever known it to be in any former period. To this class should every Minister belong. Whether he does or no, every hearer—if hearers must be judging!—every hearer that can reason, and will compare, may know certainly; for the Articles of our
own

own Church contain a Summary, of what the most Learned and Devout in Europe, at the time they were devised, recommended and felt—of all that the Learned and Devout of every country, where christianity in any purity prevails, will recommend and feel—while man continues to be a sinner, and God is known to be merciful and just!

To a person, who, in this sense, is soberly satisfied not to be 'wiser than his fathers,' and who should take a survey of the various modes and diverse opinions, that may present themselves to his inspection, but within the compass of this Metropolis, what amazement must arise; what pity, yea, what indignation—fill his breast! Could he believe that the scene of some of the noblest struggles for sound principle and christian verity; where was exhibited the constancy and fortitude of most blessed martyrs, were now changed into the seat of lukewarm indifference; or become the residence of discord and unbelief—without fearing that the divine judgments were fast approaching to that place; nay, without being sensible, that it was already involved in one of the severest and most-to-be-dreaded of them, namely, a judicial blindness to all the ways of God?—In no very bright times in Israel, the 'lowest of the people' were taken,
contrary

contrary to express appointment, and—by human warrant only—‘made’ priests unto the ‘Lord;’ which thing was ‘held for an abomination:’ And abstracting all consideration of worldly rank, those, in every country, must ever be held the ‘lowest of the people’—who are least-instructed. Surely,—could we think lightly on a subject, which has cost our fathers, and had we their virtue, might yet cost us—tears of blood, the days of the Church may be called ‘bright’ with us, when every ‘high-way’ has its ‘prophet’—and every ‘lane’ its ‘priest!’ There is not, perhaps, any country but this, where such abuses are suffered; where such ‘barren fig-trees’ protrude their leafy branches over the walls of the city of God, without bearing any ‘fruit’ for the Saviour of the world! Alas! for the defection of modern days! for the ignorance, by luxury planted, and, by worldly passions cherished to such a growth—as to cast its deadly adumbrations over the land! Yet the defection, we trust, is by no means universal. Our church, with all the breaches made upon it by open foes, with all the underminings wrought by dangerous friends, remains yet a goodly Fabric;—and shall—we put our confidence in its Great Supporter!—till ‘time shall be no more!’ But its earthly Pillars—must be Sound Divines! In its structure, there

is

is no place for the rotten stones and hollow fragments, that, in uncouth shapes, tumble out from Nature's quarry ; it demands the column hewn from the rock, by science and by art adorned and polished !

Let us notice, Thirdly, that it becomes a Minister to be a Good man—a Good Christian ; in other words a consistent character.

Here I may hope for general attention. ‘ Why callest thou me good ? There is none good but ‘ God’—was the declaration of our Saviour himself. And to whom did he make it ? Even to him—who had ‘ kept’—as he thought—‘ the ‘ commandments ;’ had neither committed adultery, murder, or theft ; and who addressed himself to Jesus, with wonderful courtesy, and, apparently, great zeal of religion ; ‘ Good Master, ‘ what good thing shall I do that I may inherit ‘ eternal life ?’ ‘ Thou knowest the command- ‘ ments,’ said our Lord ; ‘ keep them, and ‘ live.’ He ‘ knew them.’ He had ‘ kept ‘ them.’ What lack I yet ?—little expecting, that the *good Master* had any further *good* charge to give him,—only to commend him for what he had done. This, however, was added ; ‘ Sell ‘ that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and ‘ thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come
D ‘ take

‘take up the cross and follow me.’—This, it seems, was one of the things which he would not so readily assent to being ‘good;’ and, if it was, which he found no inclination ‘to do,’ even that he might ‘inherit eternal life.’ Nor is it likely, that in his sorrowing cares for his large possessions, he any longer thought the ‘Master’—who gave him such command—so ‘Good’—as at his first salutation. From hence, both Preachers and Hearers may gather some lessons of use. The same causes, will, in like circumstances, always operate similar effects. There are not many, perhaps, now-a-days, more than the ‘young man’ in the Gospel, who would obey such an injunction, or relish his advice, who should give it. Nay, the giving such a charge, and persevering to enforce it, would, in most likelihood, obscure, in worldly eyes, whatever ‘goodness adorned the character.’

‘There is none good but God’—says our Redeemer: and yet it is expected that his earthly ministring servants should be perfect. Nay, if we would even claim a little indulgence for our imperfections, we should be considered to share in all for which we pled. And by whom? By those, who are, perhaps, little careful about being in any degree ‘good’ themselves; yet
 * are not to be satisfied without finding the quality
 com-

completely visible, and as it were personified, in us. In this the Infidel and the Enthusiast—characters, in many other respects, not dissimilar—cordially agree. To persecute our Saviour, Herod and Pilate forgot their mutual enmity. And all other enmities have, many times, by other ‘Herods’ and ‘Pilates’ been foregone—to persecute his humble followers. Like the effects of fine weather, or the apprehensions of a storm, the observation of these humble powers seems to interest by a kind of natural sympathy. It makes passengers delay, it makes strangers familiar friends; it makes ‘wondering’ ‘idiots—look as they were wise!’ A man that has no natural inclination to intermeddle with other people’s affairs; thinks those of Ministers, notwithstanding, a free field for discussion; he who has no propensity to spread tales, understands an exception to be made—of those that relate to his Pastor; and he who has really no delight in malice or abuse, reserves to himself a right to join in defaming his Teacher. The most ignorant man you meet, if he has not fallen into the hands of those general Defamers—who make the Church itself out of the road of salvation—can tell you, if he can tell you nothing else, the merits and failings of his Parish Priest! —O SACRED ORDER! and ye its despised Sons! Bear, with the patience that sets off your vir-

tues, the neglect—that should not pain you, the malice—that cannot hurt you! You contend for a Crown! Mind not the dust that can only defile your feet! Upon you, are sinful people willing to lay their own transgressions; and send you forth—like the Scape-goat into the wilderness, where you may fare on any scanty food that offers—so be you carry the load of their offences!

Discouraging, as considerations like these may be, to a Minister's endeavours; it becomes him well to resist their influence, as far as he is enabled, while that would mar the usefulness of his life. A Good Life is a good Sermon: and such, it should be his nightly study, and daily endeavour, to preach. It is often said, that 'Ministers are under such obligations to live
' godly, that their fault is doubly grievous,
' where they offend.'—I take advantage of no vulgar opinions; and I fear not, at any time, to declare their falshood. False I reckon this I have mentioned. For my own part, and I would say nothing here—I could not wish to utter when I die, I know of none. I know of no commandment which bids a minister be holier than his people. It is one of the persuasions, of which Satan has made frequent use, to help the interests of his kingdom. If to one—have
been

been given ' five talents,' to another ' two,' to another ' one;' remember, that, at the day of account, to ' him that hath shall be given, ' and from him that hath not, shall be taken ' away what he seemeth to have;' and thus shall the word of God be true, and the ' hope of the ' hypocrite perish.' Mistake me not, my dear brethren!—He that is blessed with five talents, will surely improve them; hide them—it were not easy for him to do if he would; but the deposit establishes no singular claim. He that has but one, ought to improve that; and the obligation is every way the same as is his, whose trust is more extensive. No doubt, from the latter, the greater gain will be expected; but the labour is exactly proportionate. This I ought to say, for two reasons; for my regard to Truth, and for my regard for You: that you may not fall into the mistake of those, who, thinking all holiness—belong to the Sanctuary—bring none thither; and who, rather than avert punishment by repentance and obedience, would be glad to see ' judgment begin at the house of ' God.'

But here it must be remarked, that what I have said takes nothing from the strictness of a Minister's duty. Instead whereof, it only adds this additional motive to his performing it
aright,

aright, that the more voluntary his service, so much the more shall his service, if it be exemplary, be entitled to reward.

There cannot, certainly, on earth, be a consideration more satisfying to a susceptible bosom,—and he who has never felt the force of it, has never had a relish of the feast which a pious soul can share,—than for the Teacher of a people, being thus able to reckon in his own mind:

“ Of all the appointments, marked me out by
 “ kind Providence, I hold this the best, that
 “ every occurrence of my life makes me better
 “ acquainted with It’s ways ; and every perform-
 “ ance of my duty, more intimate with mine
 “ own heart. If I perceive the seeds of virtue
 “ grow within me, if I feel the operations of
 “ divine grace, I must have that satisfaction
 “ which is derived from heaven, in communi-
 “ cating them to others. Of those, to whom I
 “ am commissioned to communicate them, dif-
 “ ferent are the intellects, the advantages, the
 “ defects. To accommodate my instructions to
 “ all these—I must please myself—while I please
 “ Him that sent me.—But pleasure is not un-
 “ mixed. In the Ministry of Christ Jesus, I
 “ am rather to expect pain, and every worldly
 “ tribulation. This I can suffer, like other
 “ men ; but if my heart be good, and, if the
 “ truths

" truths of the christian system are digested
 " there, it must be good, I cannot so easily bear
 " the depravity, the loss—of any of the souls
 " committed to my care. Industrious, then,
 " let me be,—circumspective. If I have skill
 " in the water, let me not take—even my inno-
 " cent gambols there, if they endanger the safety
 " of my fellow. Let me deny myself those in-
 " dulgences, which, though I may know to be
 " harmless—may—to my brothers have the
 " 'favour of death.'—And for these sacrifices, let
 " me not be disappointed—if I meet not with
 " his gratitude. Were I only to make them,
 " for fame or remuneration, the 'publicans' and
 " 'harlots' virtue were preferable to mine. Con-
 " tent let me in this state of universal 'pil-
 " grimage' be, to point out, without expecting
 " honour for my diligence, the 'wells or-
 " 'dained for comfort,' and the overshadowing
 " 'rock' that 'pleases,' in a 'weary land.' Why
 " should I expect for honour, in such circum-
 " stances? He that would give, and I that
 " might receive it, would both of us idle our
 " time about the business, and be very little
 " the better for it. He—that can see us both,
 " and can reward us as we deserve at the end,
 " bids us haste onwards in company towards
 " himself. Him let us mind, as the all-mighty
 " and all-watchful Shepherd; forgetting alike
 " the

“ the pains of leading, and the fatigues of being
 “ led ; till we reach that ‘ Fold’ of ever-ver-
 “ dant pasture—where the ‘ Lamb’ himself
 “ shall conduct us, and his presence be obscured
 “ no more !”

I must not omit remarking, that it is not only
 necessary and becoming, in a Minister of the
 Gospel, to have the most established sense of the
 truth of it, but that it is villainy in him—if he
 has not ! Christianity fears no spies ; yet those
 that are calculated for no other service, should
 be compelled, methinks, to pass into another
 province. It would be held ignominious to
 follow—as a Soldier—the standard, erected in a
 cause against which went his conscience ; grant-
 ing that he had full leave to change it for another.
 So let it be in this warfare. Let not him be
 enlisted, that is not prepared to fight. Let not
 him appear to fight, that wishes not to overcome.
 Let those that choose to abide the fate of
 ‘ Korah, Dathan, and Abiram,’ join themselves
 to ‘ their company ;’ but let such as abhor their
 defection, ‘ get them up from their tents.’

“ Let a Minister be a good man !” By this
 is not meant, that he should be *good* by the mea-
 sure of worldly-mindedness ; that he should de-
 scend to humour human fancies, or follow the
 caprices

caprices of a multitude; that he learn an accommodating creed from every company he keeps—instead of having the firmness to enforce his own; it is not that he should be passive with the haughty, nor tolerant with the gay; that he should be wanted in the convivial hour, or necessary to ‘fill up a corner at a Lady’s gaming table.’ These are some of the gifts—which Simon Magus might envy; and which only the lovers of impostors like him—could value. Together let them perish: And if they deserve an epitaph, let it be this; ‘In their life they remembered not God, wherefore, in their death, they are shut out from his sight.’—The ‘goodness’ of a Preacher, is in resembling Him who gave him the power; in fortitude in asserting his Master’s cause,—and never regarding the face of man for the interests of Him that sent him. He is to be ‘harmless as the dove,’ but he is to be, at the same time, impatient of vice. He is also—to be ‘wise as the serpent;’ and to know how to balance the difference, between basking in eternal sunshine—and a sickly hour of prickly repose.

With such qualifications, my Brethren, and many others which have been slightly touched on, should a minister of Christ be stored. With these, he should be certain that he has an inward

call of the Spirit, and an outward opening in the Church of God for usefulness, before he undertake an office—which—from secular views alone—were no optionable post! With ‘wolves’ is the christian fold—yet infested; greedy to devour the guardless, and watchful—to fly upon the stray. ’Tis a cruel nature, a savage temper; but, knowing it, it behoves us to be prepared. The less we are like them, the more easily they know us; and no sooner do they know us—than they distinguish us for their prey.—‘The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.’—‘For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.’

The sum of all that has been said, is this; God has ‘sent’ into his ‘church’ some apostles, some interpreters, some with the gifts of speech: Those are to be heard; and none but those whom he hath sent are to be heard with good effect. On them it is incumbent, to set forth a pattern—of Learning, sound Judgment, and unaffected Piety. On their hearers it is not less incumbent—to follow the pattern that is set.

Thus

Thus working together for good, the 'Day of
 ' the Lord' shall not 'approach us as a thief in
 ' the night;' but find us in love—in obedience
 —and prayer—waiting together with one devout
 consent—when He, that sent forth his inferior
 Shepherds,—shall come to 'take care of His own
 ' flock;' and to reward those—that have been
 ' faithful in a little, with the possession of much!"

" Raife up thy Spirit, O Lord, and come
 " among us; renew Thy covenant with us, as
 " in days of old. Let not 'like people like
 " 'priest,' be a mark of Thy judgment upon us;
 " but give to the 'vine' that Thou hast
 " 'planted,' to the 'flock' that Thou hast se-
 " lected, 'husbandmen' and 'shepherds'—to
 " 'discern and separate—between the fruitful
 " 'and the vile.'

" In search of atonement, for where we have
 " erred; in seeking comfort where we suffer;
 " may the word of Thy gospel be our only
 " guide, and Christ, the blessed Jesus, our rock
 " and our all!

" To the Ministers of Thy Word, here as-
 " sembled, continue the 'smiles of Thy coun-
 " 'tenance, which are better than life.' May
 " truth, and zeal, and union, flourish among us.

" Make

" Make our ' Judges truth, and our Exactors
 " ' righteousness.' So may Time bring us for-
 " ward—while Time is allowed to witness our
 " actions—in grateful accord with thy benevo-
 " lent providence, and in happy concord with
 " one another, to a peaceful close of our respec-
 " tive labours, in that unseen eternal world,
 " where, for every thing that has been valuable
 " in human conception, expression, or deed,
 " there is—before Thee—for the consolation of
 " those that love Thee—a ' Book of remem-
 " brance written!'—and from whence, every
 " anxiety that ' disturbs,' every ' sigh' that de-
 " presses,—every ' sorrowing' that discomforts
 " —shall for ever flee away."

Amen.